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SUPPORT BY THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM
OF THE EFFORTS OF GOVERNMENTS TO
PROMOTE AND CONSOLIDATE NEW OR
RESTORED DEMOCRACIES

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-third year

Letter dated 31 March 1998 from the Chargé d'Affaires a.i of the Permanent Mission of Yugoslavia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a statement by the Government of the Republic of Serbia of 31 March 1998.

I would be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under item 33 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Vladislav JOVANOVIC
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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ANNEX

Statement of 31 March 1998 by the Government of the Republic of Serbia

The Government of Serbia at its meeting today reviewed the situation in Kosovo and Metohija in the light of the measures and activities undertaken recently with a view to reducing tensions in that part of the Republic. The Government positively assessed the trend of improvement of security and the normalization of the overall situation, creating favourable conditions for a genuine political process.

It noted that there was a positive international response to the declaration by the President of the Republic of Serbia, Mr. Milan Milutinovic, on the political process in Kosovo and Metohija (A/53/89-S/1998/250, annex) and to his clear call for a direct and unconditional dialogue with representatives of national minorities living in Kosovo and Metohija. This is an expression of the true interest of the Government of Serbia to resolve all issues by political means on the basis of the European standards in the field of human and civil rights, as well as the rights of the members of national minorities living in Serbia. In particular, the importance of broad support for the territorial integrity of Serbia and Yugoslavia and a strong condemnation of separatism as an idea contrary to the principles of the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, was underscored.

A clear condemnation of terrorism unambiguously shows that the international community strongly opposes this universal scourge. All this has contributed to an increased realism and awareness of the citizens of Kosovo and Metohija, including a vast majority of the members of the Albanian minority, that all issues can be solved only through direct dialogue and political means within Serbia.

Because of the reduction of tensions and normalization of the situation in Kosovo and Metohija, regular police forces successfully carry out their duties of maintaining the peace and public order and protecting private property.

The results achieved in the resolution of specific issues, such as the successful accord on the implementation of the education agreement and the successful start of its implementation, make a special contribution to this positive trend.

The Government of Serbia noted that the requests of members of the Muslim, Romany, Turkish and other minorities and ethnic communities living in Kosovo and Metohija to take part in the political dialogue are legitimate, and those requests have been accepted. The fact that a number of representatives of the Albanian minority have also expressed an interest and accepted the dialogue is positive as well.

The Government noted that its call for a genuine, unconditional political dialogue has not so far been responded to by representatives of the political parties of the Albanian national minority. The Government also regrets that,

despite the repeated urging by the international community, these representatives have not yet condemned terrorism. Such an approach is detrimental, primarily to the interests of the members of the Albanian national minority.

It is clear that the leaders of the Albanian political parties bear the sole responsibility for failure to enter into a genuine dialogue in spite of repeated calls by the Government of Serbia.

The Government this time again reaffirms its determination and resolve to reach, in an open and direct dialogue with representatives of the Albanian and other minorities in Kosovo and Metohija, generally acceptable solutions for all specific issues related to the exercise of their human and civil rights and self-administration, in accordance with the applicable European and international standards.

For this purpose, the Government has designated a delegation headed by the Vice-President of the Government, Professor Ratko Markovic, Dr. Milovan Bojic, Vice-President of the Government, Mr. Tomislav Nikolic, Vice-President of the Government, Mr. Andrea Milosavljevic, Mr. Ivan Sedlak, Minister without portfolio, and Mr. Ratomir Vico, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Serbian Assembly, were also included in the delegation. The discussions of the delegation of the Government of Serbia with the representatives of national minorities in Kosovo and Metohija will also be attended by representatives of parliamentary political parties and by the special representative of the President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Dr. Vladan Kutlesic, Vice-President of the Federal Government.

The Government calls upon representatives of the political parties of the Albanian minority to come to the talks a week from today, i.e., on 7 April 1998, in the building of the Republican Government in Pristina, Vidovdanska 2, at 11 a.m.

Apart from this public invitation, the Government of Serbia has regularly addressed written invitations to representatives of the political parties of the Albanian minority and to public figures, namely to Ibrahim Rugova, President of the Democratic Alliance of Kosovo, Adem Demaci, President of the Parliamentary Party of Kosovo, Mrs. Ljuljeta Pulja-Beciri, President of the Social Democratic Party, Mark Krasnici, President of the Christian Democratic Party, Hajura Gorani, President of the Union of Independent Trade Unions and Hivzi Isljami, President of the Peasant Party, as well as to Mahmut Bakali, Azem Vlasi, Remzi Koljgeci, Kacusa Jasari and Gani Jasari.